



# Support for Marijuana Policy Reform

- National polls have shown that the public is far ahead of most elected officials in support for marijuana policy reform.
- An overwhelming majority of voters in national polls support allowing medical marijuana — with the polls consistently finding 60% to 80% support. Statewide polls also show strong support, from Alabama to Wyoming.
- National and statewide polling have also found majority support for punishing marijuana possession with a civil fine instead of jail time.
- Although polls have not yet shown consistent national support for replacing marijuana prohibition with a system of regulation and taxation, they have shown an upward trend. In addition, polls in at least four states have shown majority or plurality support.

## Medical marijuana

- A January 2010 nationwide ABC News/Washington Post poll found that 81% of Americans think that doctors should “be allowed to prescribe marijuana for medical purposes to treat their patients.”
- Support spans age groups as well. In a November 2004 AARP poll, 72% of Americans aged 45 and older said that “adults should be allowed to legally use marijuana for medical purposes.”
- Since 1996, a majority of voters in Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, the District of Columbia, Maine, Michigan, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington state have voted in favor of ballot initiatives to remove criminal penalties for seriously ill people who grow or possess medical marijuana.
- State legislatures in Delaware, Hawaii, New Jersey, New Mexico, Rhode Island, and Vermont have listened to their constituents and passed medical marijuana laws.
- Polls show that public approval of medical marijuana laws has increased or remained the same since the laws went into effect.

## State-specific medical marijuana public opinion polling results

STATE	DATE/POLLING FIRM	% IN FAVOR	QUESTION WORDING
Alabama	July 2004 Mobile Register- University of South Alabama	75%	Support legalizing marijuana for medical use under a doctor’s supervision
Arkansas	August 18-21, 2003 The Southwest Group	58%	Support an “initiative [that] would allow seriously ill patients suffering from cancer, HIV or AIDS, multiple sclerosis, epilepsy, glaucoma, or severe chronic pain to use medical marijuana if they have the approval of their doctors and the state health department”
Connecticut	March 1-7, 2011 Quinnipiac	79%	Support “allowing a doctor to prescribe marijuana for medical purposes”
Florida	June 10-17, 2006 Goodwin Simon Victoria Research	64%	Support “allowing people with cancer, multiple sclerosis, and other serious illnesses to use and grow their own marijuana for medical purposes, as long as their physician approves”

<b>Idaho</b>	December 2006 Goodwin Simon Victoria Research	54%	Support allowing "Idaho residents with cancer, AIDS, multiple sclerosis, and other serious illnesses to grow and use marijuana for medical purposes, as long as their physician approves"
<b>Illinois</b>	February 9-16, 2008 Mason-Dixon Polling & Research, Inc.	68%	Support allowing "seriously and terminally ill patients to use and grow medical marijuana for personal use if their doctors recommend it"
<b>Iowa</b>	February 2010 Selzer & Co., for the Des Moines Register	64%	"Do you favor or oppose allowing medical marijuana in Iowa?"
<b>Maryland</b>	February 18-20, 2011 Public Policy Polling	72%	Support Maryland's medical marijuana proposal
<b>Massachusetts</b>	September 2009 Suffolk University	81%	Support allowing "seriously ill patients to use, grow, and purchase marijuana for medical purposes if they have the approval of their physicians."
<b>Minnesota</b>	May 1, 2008 Survey USA	64%	"Think marijuana should be legal when used for medicinal purposes"
<b>New Hampshire</b>	April 7-8, 2008 Mason-Dixon Polling & Research, Inc.	71%	Support "changing the law in New Hampshire to allow seriously and terminally ill patients to use and grow medical marijuana for personal use if their doctors recommend it"
<b>New York</b>	September 2010 Quinnipiac University	71%	Support a bill allowing "adults to legally use marijuana for medical purposes if their doctor prescribes it"
<b>Ohio</b>	May 2009 Ohio Poll, Institute for Policy Research, University of Cincinnati	73%	Favor allowing Ohio doctors to prescribe marijuana for medical purposes to treat their patients
<b>Pennsylvania</b>	May 2010 Franklin & Marshall College Poll	80%	"Generally speaking, do you favor or oppose allowing adults to legally use marijuana for medical purposes if a doctor recommends it?"
<b>Texas</b>	May 2010 University of Texas / Texas Tribune	69%	Support medical marijuana
<b>Virginia</b>	June 2001 Quality of Life in Virginia Survey	75%	Agree that doctors should be "allowed to prescribe marijuana for medical use when it reduces pain from cancer treatment or other illnesses"
<b>Wisconsin</b>	July 11-22, 2005 Chamberlin Research Consultants	76%	Support a bill that would "allow people with cancer, multiple sclerosis, or other serious illnesses to use marijuana for medical purposes, as long as their physician approves"
<b>Wyoming</b>	February 2002 Lucas Organization	65%	Support an initiative that "would remove the threat of arrest and all other penalties for seriously ill patients who use and grow their own medical marijuana with the approval of their physicians"

## Penalizing Marijuana Possession With a Fine, Not Jail Time

- An October 2010 *Newsweek* poll found that 55% of Americans would support a measure in their state that downgrades possession of an ounce of marijuana from a misdemeanor to an infraction punishable by a \$100 fine and no arrest record.
- Currently, 14 states have removed the threat of jail time for individuals simply possessing a small amount of marijuana: Alaska, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Mississippi, Nebraska, Nevada, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, and Oregon.
- In November 2008, 65% of Massachusetts voters replaced the possibility of a criminal conviction and jail time with a \$100 civil fine. This has been the only statewide initiative on “decriminalizing” possession of modest amounts of marijuana.

## State-specific decriminalization public opinion polling results

State	Date/Polling Firm	% in Favor	Question Wording
Connecticut	March 3-8, 2009 Quinnipiac University	58%	Think it is a good idea for “low-level marijuana users [to] be punished with a fine, instead of a criminal charge.”
New Hampshire	April 7-8, 2008 Mason-Dixon Polling & Research, Inc.	53%	Support “a change in the law to provide for a \$100 fine without jail time for those who possess an ounce or less of marijuana for personal use.”
Rhode Island	April 29-30, 2008 Mason-Dixon Polling & Research, Inc.	64%	Support “a change in the law to provide for a fine without jail time or the threat of arrest for those who possess an ounce or less of marijuana for personal use.”
Vermont	Jan. 9-10, 2009 Mason-Dixon Polling & Research, Inc.	63%	Support “a change in the law to provide for a \$100 civil fine without jail time for those who possess an ounce or less of marijuana for personal use.”

## Ending Marijuana Prohibition

- National polls, including Pew and Gallup, have shown a steady increase in support for ending marijuana prohibition in the United States, from 31% in 2000, to 45% or 46% in 2010 and 2011.
- Polls in at least four states — California, Colorado, Washington state, and Vermont — have shown majority or plurality support for replacing marijuana prohibition with a taxed and regulated market.
- There is a real possibility that voters in one or more states will vote to take marijuana off the criminal market in 2012. Ballot measures are planned in California, Colorado, Oregon, and Washington state. While 53.5% of California voters voted against a similar measure in 2010, the turn out in a midterm election year was less favorable than is expected in 2012.
- In 2010 and 2011, bills to opt out of marijuana prohibition were considered in California, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Washington state. At the federal level, the first-ever bill to end federal marijuana prohibition was introduced in June 2011 by Reps. Barney Frank (D-MA), Ron Paul (R-TX), and three co-sponsors.

Polling Firm	Date	Support	Oppose	Question Wording
Gallup	October 7-10, 2010	46%	50%	“Do you think the use of marijuana should be made legal, or not?”
The Pew Research Center	February 22- March 1, 2011	45%	50%	“Should marijuana use be legal?”